



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Environmental Assessment

DOI-BLM-NV-W010-2017-0034-EA

C Punch Ranch, Inc. Land Sale N-85027



PREPARING OFFICE

U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management
Winnemucca District-Humboldt River Field Office
5100 East Winnemucca Blvd.
Winnemucca, Nevada 89445

Cost \$110,000
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It is the mission of the Bureau of Land Management to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Identifying Information

1.1.1 Title, Environmental Assessment (EA) number and type of project

Title: C Punch Ranch, Inc. Land Sale

EA Number: DOI-BLM-NV-W010-2017-0034

Type of Project: Lands and Realty

1.1.2 Location of Proposed Action

The federal lands nominated for sale included: Township 26 North, Range 27 East, MDM, sections 2, 10 and 14, comprising approximately 1,954.52 acres in Pershing County, Nevada (Figure 1).

1.1.3 Name and Location of Preparing Office

Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

Winnemucca District, Humboldt River Field Office (HRFO)

5100 East Winnemucca Boulevard

Winnemucca, Nevada 89445

1.1.4 Identify subject function code, lease, seral or case file number

Case file number: N-85027

1.1.5 Applicant Name

C Punch Ranch, Inc.

1.2 Purpose and Need for Action

The purpose of the federal action is to make available by direct sale to C Punch Ranch, Inc., T. 26 N, R. 27 E, sections 2, 10, and 14, totaling approximately 1,954.52 acres in Pershing County, Nevada.

The need for the action is established by BLM's responsibility under Sec. 203 of the Federal Land Policy Management Act, 1976, and under 43 CFR 2711.1-1 (c) to respond to a request for a land sale. The need to process the request as a direct land sale is established by 43 CFR 2711.3-3 (4).

1.3 Decision to be Made

The BLM will decide whether-or-not to dispose subject parcels for private ownership or to retain the parcels under federal ownership. If the BLM's decision is to sell the subject parcels, then it will be determined under what terms, conditions, and stipulations the sale would occur.

2.0 Alternatives

2.1 Alternative A (Proposed Action)

2.1.1 Description Including Location and Access

The BLM proposes to convey by direct land sale to C Punch Ranch, Inc. T. 26 N, R. 27 E, sections 2, 10, and 14, totaling approximately 1,954.52 acres in the Granite Springs Valley, Pershing County (Figure 2). The three parcels are public lands that have been identified as suitable for disposal in the Resource Management Plan for the Winnemucca District Planning Area (BLM 2015). The parcels represent in-holdings within an area of checkerboard land, where Sections 2, 10 and 14 are surrounded on all sides by land owned by C Punch Ranch, Inc. There are no other private landowners in the project area, therefore, there would be no bidding process involved and the land would be sold at fair market value. There are no recorded or known easements or rights-of-way located in the three identified sections.

The land would be transferred as a split estate where the mineral estate would be retained by the Federal government and the surface estate would be conveyed to C Punch Ranch, Inc. The ranch plans to use the purchased land to consolidate private land holdings in the area of an existing hay ranch and to continue existing land uses including cattle grazing.

2.1.2 Reasonably Foreseeable Development

The ranch plans to use the purchased land to consolidate private land holdings in the area of an existing hay ranch and to continue existing land uses including cattle grazing. Based on currently identified ground water resources, state permitting for development of new irrigated hay production on the subject parcels is not possible. Future land disturbances under private ownership would be limited to potential construction of new fencing or access routes to facilitate the adjoining hay operation, or possibly a new stockwater development. Based onsite limitations, no new site development or construction is planned to occur on the involved parcels under private ownership.

2.2 Alternative B (No Action)

The public lands within the requested parcels would be retained by the Federal government and managed by the BLM for multiple use. Currently, the predominant use of the parcels is livestock grazing as currently permitted on the Blue Wing-Seven Troughs (BWST) Allotment (NV00135).

2.3 Alternatives Considered but not Analyzed in Detail

A third alternative was considered by the BLM interdisciplinary team during internal scoping. The alternative considered was the competitive sale of the parcels. The subject federally-administered parcels represent in-holdings within an area of checkerboard landownership, where sections 2, 10 and 14 are surrounded on all sides by land owned by the C Punch Ranch, Inc. There are no other private landowners in the immediate area. Therefore, the BLM determined that a direct land sale was the appropriate mechanism.

2.4 Land Use Conformance

The three parcels are public lands that have been identified as suitable for disposal in the Resource Management Plan for the Winnemucca District Planning Area (RMP) (BLM 2015). See Figure 2.28, Appendix A and Appendix P of the RMP. Objective LR 2 in the Record of Decision (ROD) states, make available for disposal (through sale or exchange) those public lands where disposal provides for public benefit, public lands that have little or no resource value and that consolidates BLM land patterns to ensure effective administration, improve resource management and promote community development.

Action LR 2.2 further clarifies that any land disposal must meet the following land disposal criteria, unless otherwise noted:

- All lands considered potentially suitable for sale must meet one or more of the criteria outlined in Section 203(a) of FLPMA and is identified by legal description in this document. An interest in land reserved to the US may be conveyed to the patent holder, pursuant to Section 203 (a) of FLPMA, if it is determined to be in the public interest.
- The land is designated as suitable for disposal in this Resource Management Plan.
- The land does not contain important wetlands or riparian wildlife habitat, other water resources, significant cultural resources, recreational values, or national historic or scenic trails.
- Disposal of the land would not adversely impact the manageability of remaining public lands.
- Disposal of the land would not adversely impact the public's access to remaining public lands.
- The lands are not essential to candidate, listed or proposed threatened or endangered species or identified as priority wildlife habitat.
- No public lands that contain water improvements, such as guzzlers, would be disposed of unless the buyer is willing to relocate the water improvement, at the buyer's sole and complete cost, to a location deemed suitable by BLM and Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW).
- No lands that are classified as VRM Class II due the proximity of the National Historic System of Trails would be disposed of.
- Disposal of the land is deemed to be in the public's interest.

3.0 Affected Environment & Environmental Consequences

This chapter presents the existing environment and the environmental consequences for resources that could be affected by the Proposed Action and No Action alternatives. Onsite resources were reviewed, summarized, and assessed for project effects in the following documents:

- Biological Technical Report prepared by Resource Concepts, Inc. (RCI 2019)
Included: geology; soils; ecological site correlations; vegetation; noxious weeds; wildlife (including big game species, Greater sage-grouse and raptors); migratory birds; threatened and endangered plant and animal species; BLM sensitive plant and animal species.
- Cultural & Historic Resource Inventory & Assessment Report prepared by the Great Basin Consulting Group (GBCG 2019)
- Phase 1 Environmental Site Review (RCI 2020)
Included hazardous and solid waste.

The EA also relied on two internal BLM staff reports, including an environmental justice analysis (BLM 2019b) and a mineral potential report (BLM 2019c). All five listed documents are identified in the Section 8.0 References.

3.1 Issues

The BLM Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) met on September 5, 2019, to review the Proposed Action and to scope potential environmental effects based on first-hand knowledge and the site reports listed above. All of the resources were determined by the IDT of either not being present or present but not affected and are identified and disclosed in Tables 3.1 and 3.2. . The rationale used to make these determinations are also noted in the attached tables by resource heading. Any minor impacts to these resources do not violate any state or federal standards, are in line with the goals and objectives of the resource management plan, and have not shown to be controversial to the public in the past or present for similar authorizations. Therefore, the impacts do not rise to the level of an issue, as described in the BLM NEPA handbook, needing further analysis to inform this decision

As the benchmark for the existing conditions, the Alternative B is not expected to affect the resources present because there is no material change in either existing land uses or administration.

Table 3.1 List of Supplemental Authorities

Supplemental Authorities	Not Present	Present Not Affected	Present Affected	Rationale/Comments
Air Quality		X		Alternative A represents the consolidation the land status pattern and includes no planned land development and only minimal future surface disturbances. Existing land uses will continue, including livestock grazing. Alternative A is not expected to impact this resource.
Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs)	X			Resource not present.
Cultural Resources		X		An intensive (Class III) cultural resources inventory of the entire project area was completed in 2018 (GBCG 2019). Nine (9) cultural resource sites were identified. The BLM determined none (0) of the sites eligible to the National Register of Historic Places, and by extension that the undertaking would result in No Historic Properties Affected. The BLM's determinations of eligibility and effect were concurred by the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office on May 21, 2019.
Environmental Justice (EJ)		X		The Proposed Action is not expected to have a disproportionate impact on EJ populations (BLM 2019b).
Floodplains	X			Resource not present.
Historic Trails (Including visual setting)	X			No National Historical Trails or viewsheds are present in the project area.
Invasive, Nonnative Species		X		One noxious weed species, saltcedar (<i>Tamarix ramosissima</i>), was identified in the project area (RCI 2019). The minimal disturbances from the proposal are not expected to substantially increase the noxious and invasive weeds species that are present.

Supplemental Authorities	Not Present	Present Not Affected	Present Affected	Rationale/Comments
Migratory Birds		X		Several species of migratory birds may be present (RCI 2019). Alternative A is not expected to represent an adverse impact. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act would continue to apply to the parcels transferred to private ownership.
Native American Religious Concerns	X			Letters presenting project information and inviting tribes to enter into government-to-government consultation for this project were sent 6/23/2017 to the Lovelock Paiute Tribe, Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe, and Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe. The BLM discussed the project with the Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe during an in-person meeting on 7/16/2017. No concerns have been raised by any tribe regarding the project to date. Tribal consultation is ongoing through the life of the project.
Prime or Unique Farmlands	X			Resource not present (RCI 2019).
Threatened & Endangered Species (T&E)	X			There is no potential habitat for T&E species (RCI 2019).
Wastes, Hazardous or Solid	X			Based on the Phase I ESA there are no recognized environmental conditions (RECs) found in the project area (RCI 2020).
Water Quality (Surface and Ground)		X		Ephemeral surface water is present and there are ground water wells in the area. Neither are expected to be impacted.
Wetlands and Riparian Zones	X			Resource not present.
Wild and Scenic Rivers	X			Resource not present.
Wilderness	X			Resource not present.

Table 3.2 Additional Affected Resources

Additional Affected Resources	<u>Not Present</u>	<u>Present Not Affected</u>	<u>Present Affected</u>	Rationale/Comments
Fisheries	X			Resource not present.
Lands with Wilderness Characteristics	X			The project area was re-assessed in March 2016 and the area was found lacking in wilderness characteristics due to limited size from being almost completely checkerboard. The area was also found to have surface occupancy, structural development, constructed roads, lack of naturalness, lack of solitude, and no opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation. It has been determined that it does not meet the criteria for Lands with Wilderness Characteristics and no further analysis is recommended.
Mineral & Energy Resources		X		The project area is potentially valuable for geothermal resources and leasable minerals, including sodium and potassium (BLM 2019c). The mineral estate would not be conveyed under the proposed action. The action would result in a split-estate situation in accordance with BLM guidance and regulations and is not an issue that requires analysis..
Noise		X		Alternative A represents the consolidation of the land status pattern and includes no planned land development and only minimal future surface disturbances. Existing land uses will continue. The proposal is not expected to impact this resource.
Paleontology	X			The project is located in an area of low to moderate potential for significant paleontological resources (Potential Fossil Yield Classification II and III) with no known fossil localities in a 10-mile radius. Due to the nature of the project and the local environment, there is no potential for impacts to significant <u>paleontological resources.</u>

Additional Affected Resources	Not Present	Present Not Affected	Present Affected	Rationale/Comments
Rangeland Management		X		The acreage involved in Alternative A is minor when compared to the area and forage resources located in the Blue Wing-Seven Troughs Allotment. Alternative A would have no material effect on existing grazing permits. No existing range improvements are located in the project area.
Realty		X		There are no land use authorizations in the project area that could be impacted.
Recreation (including public access)		X		Alternative A represents consolidation of the land status pattern and includes no planned land development and only minimal future surface disturbances. Existing land uses will continue, except for the potential future reduction in public access. There are several existing roads in the vicinity of the project area that the public currently utilizes to travel through the area. Alternative A would have no impact on public recreation or access.
Social Values and Economics	X			No change in land use is proposed. No effect to social values and economics.
Soils		X		The minimal land disturbances associated with Alternative A and continuance of existing land uses would have no impact on this resource (RCI 2019).
Special Status Species (Plants and Animals)		X		The minimal land disturbances associated with Alternative A and continuance of existing land uses would have no impact on these resource values (RCI 2019).
Vegetation		X		The minimal land disturbances associated with Alternative A and continuance of existing land uses would have no impact on these resource values (RCI 2019).
Visual Resources		X		Alternative A would not impact the visual characterization of the area (i.e., Class IV designation). Night skies would not be impacted.

Additional Affected Resources	Not Present	Present Not Affected	Present Affected	Rationale/Comments
Water Quantity		X		No permanent surface water in project area. Nearly all existing ground water resources in the Granite Springs Valley are permitted to the C Punch Ranch. Alternative A does not involve increased ground water pumping or usage.
Wild Horses and Burros	X			There are several designated Herd Management Areas (HMAs) in the general area. No HMAs approach the project area by several miles.
Wildlife		X		Alternative A poses no impacts to wildlife species (RCI 2019). The BLM recommends the use of wildlife-friendly fence designs if future fencing is constructed in the project area.
Wilderness Study Areas	X			Resource not present.

4.0 Cumulative Effects

No cumulative impacts are expected under the Proposed Action or the No Action Alternative.

5.0 Recommended Mitigation & Monitoring

No project mitigation or monitoring was identified beyond the staff recommendation to utilize wildlife-friendly designs should added fence construction occur on the lands transferred under Alternative A. See Table 3.2 under Wildlife for this staff recommendation.

6.0 Tribes, Individuals, Organizations, Agencies Consulted

6.1 Native American Consultation

Date	Tribal Government	Communication Method
6/23/2019	Lovelock Paiute Tribe	Letter offering government consultation
6/23/2019	Fallon Paiute-Shoshone Tribe	Letter offering government consultation
6/23/2019	Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe	Letter offering government consultation
7/16/2019	Pyramid Lake Paiute Tribe	In-person meeting

6.2 Coordination and/or Consultation (Agencies)

Name	Agency or Authorities for Consultation or Coordination	Findings & Conclusions
Agency Report	US Fish & Wildlife Service Reno Field Office	Listing of endangered, threatened plant and animal species and migratory birds in the vicinity (RCI 2019).
Bonnie Weller GIS Specialist	Nevada Department of Wildlife	Listing of known or potential occurrence of wildfire resources in the vicinity (RCI 2019).
Eric Miskow Biologist/ Data Manager	Nevada Natural Heritage Program, DCNR	Listing of endangered, threatened, candidate and at-risk plant and animal species in the vicinity (RCI 2019).

6.3 Individuals and/or Organizations Consulted

The nature of this proposal is such that it does not require any particular consultation with individuals or organizations.

6.4 Public Outreach/Involvement

The final EA will be made available to the public through the district's e-planning webpage. The EA received a thorough interdisciplinary review which resulted in essentially no issues.

7.0 List of Preparers

BLM Interdisciplinary Team

Name	Title	EA Area(s) of Responsibility
Debra Dunham	Realty Specialist	Project Lead and Realty
Julie McKinnon	Realty Specialist	Project Co-Lead and Realty
Lynn Ricci Robin Michael	Planning & Environmental Coordinator	NEPA Compliance
Wes Berry	Rangeland Management Specialist	Rangeland Management
Mike Kizorek Braydon Gaard	Outdoor Recreation Planner	Recreation; Wilderness; Lands with Wilderness Characteristics
Tanner Whetstone	Archeologist	Cultural Resources; Paleontology; Native American Consultation
Kathleen Rehberg	Assistant Manager / Geologist	Minerals & Geothermal Resources
Jean Black	Geologist/Environmental Protection Specialist	Geology; Soils; Water Quality
Nicholas Pay	Assistant Manager/Cultural, Lands & Recreation	Cultural Resources; Paleontology; Native American Consultation
Clay Edmondson	Wildlife Biologist	Threatened & Endangered Species; Special Status Species; General Wildlife
Ken Loda	Geologist	Minerals & Geothermal Resources
Julie Suhr Pierce	Great Basin Socioeconomic Specialist	Environmental Justice; Social Values & Economics
Kurt Miers	Environmental Protection Specialist	Environmental Site Assessment; Hazardous & Solid Waste
Samantha Gooch	Wild Horse & Burro Specialist	Wild Horse & Burro Management
Michael McCampbell Andy Laca	Natural Resource Planner	Vegetation; Invasive & Nonnative Species
Zwaantje Rorex Michael Garner	GIS Specialist	GIS; Resource Mapping

Resource Concepts, Inc. (RCI) Third-Party EA Contractor

Name	Title	EA Area(s) of Responsibility
Don Henderson	Senior Resource Specialist	EA Author; RCI Project Manager
Lewis Mendive	Range Conservationist	Biological Technical Report (RCI 2019)
Jeremy Drew	Senior Resource Specialist	Biological Technical Report (RCI 2019)
Marvin Tebeau	Principal Environmental Specialist	Phase 1 Site Environmental Assessment Report. (RCI 2020)
Jim Koch	Senior Environmental Specialist	Phase 1 Site Environmental Assessment Report. (RCI 2020)
Jody Matranga Courtney Angus	Word Processing/Publication	EA Word Processing

8.0 References

- Bureau of Land Management (BLM). 2015. *Record of decision and Resource Management Plan for the Winnemucca District Planning Area*. Decision date May 21, 2015. U.S. Department of Interior. [2015 WDO Resource Management Plan](#).
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM). 2019a. *Figures 1 and 2 BLM GIS Data*, including: BLM NV PLSS (CADNSDI Version 2) Township Polygon; BLM NV PLSS (CADNSDI Version 2) First Division Polygon; BLM NV Surface Management Agency (SMA) Polygons; BLM NVCA ARMPA GRSP Habitat 2019; and, BLM HRFO C-Punch Land Sale 20160322 Polygon. Information provided by Zwaantje Rorex, GIS Specialist, Winnemucca District Office on September 25, 2019.
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM). 2019b. *C Punch Ranch Environmental Justice Analysis*. Prepared by J.A Suhr Pierce, PhD, Great Basin Socioeconomic Specialist for the BLM Humboldt Field Office, Winnemucca, NV. Dated September 5, 2019. 3pp.
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM). 2019c. *Mineral potential report*. Prepared by the BLM Humboldt Field Office, Winnemucca, NV. Serial No. NVN-085027. 41pp.
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM). 2019d. *Rangeland administration system reports*. [BLM RAS Reports](#). Accessed October 31, 2019.
- Great Basin Consulting Group, LLC (GBCG). 2019. *Class III Cultural Resources Inventory for portions of the C Punch Ranch, Inc. exclusive to Sections 2, 10 and 14, Township 26 North, Range 27 East, MDBM*. Prepared under the direction of BLM Humboldt River Field Office.
- Resource Concepts, Inc. (RCI). 2019. *Biological Technical Report, C Punch Blue Wing Hay Ranch Land Conveyance, Pershing County, Nevada*. Final report. Prepared for the USDI BLM Winnemucca District and the C Punch Ranch, Inc. Dated March 7, 2019.
- Resource Concepts, Inc. (RCI). 2020. *Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, C Punch Ranch, Lovelock, Nevada*. Prepared for the USDI BLM Winnemucca District and the C Punch Ranch, Inc. Dated May 29, 2020.

9.0 Mapping

Figure 1. Vicinity Map

Figure 2. Project Area Map

BLM (2019a)

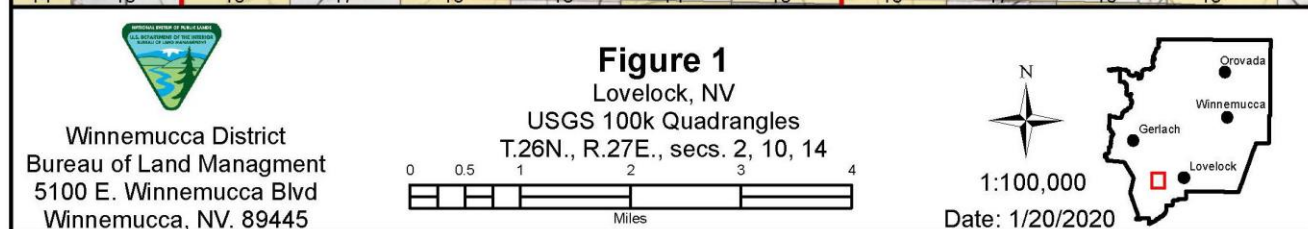


Figure 2. Project Area Map
C-Punch Ranch Inc. Land Sale N-85027
 BLM (2019a)

